

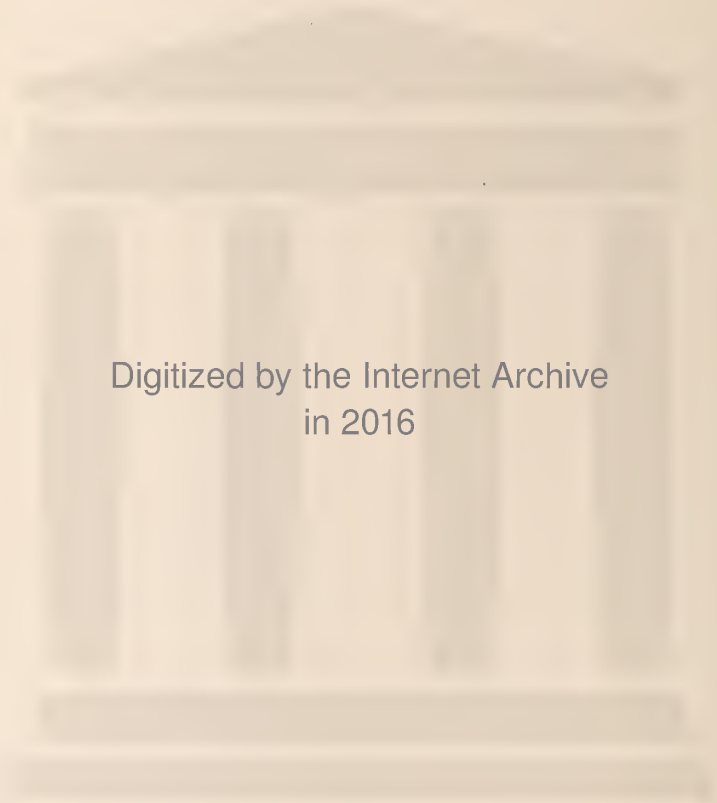
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A BRIEF SKETCH
of the
RECORD OF THE AMERICAN
NEGRO AND INDIAN
in the
GREAT WAR



REPORT OF THE
COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION OF THE
BOSTON HAMPTON COMMITTEE

MARCH, 1919



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A Brief Sketch of the Record of the American Negro and Indian in the Great War

In trying to learn what the war record of the Negro at home and abroad has been, I think, apart from his actual record on the battlefield, that what has seemed the most interesting feature of it has been the constant evidence of the place which Hampton has filled in the tremendous task which this country set itself to do. The most practical proofs of this have been, of course, the Hampton men who have been in the service. There have been 766 graduates and ex-students of Hampton in the army and navy, 722 of them Negroes and 44 Indians; and of the Negroes, 41 received commissions at the various camps for colored officers throughout the country.

Shortly after the plan for raising a National Army was made, a call was sent to the trade schools, like Hampton, Tuskegee, etc., for volunteers for an engineer regiment to be trained at Camp Sherman, as part of the 92d Division; and to this call 35 Hampton students at once responded, and became later a part of the 317th Engineers. Another proof of Hampton's value to the country in war time was the contract made with it by the War Department to give a two months' intensive course in such war-emergency trades as blacksmithing, carpentry, machine and electrical work, with military training as well; and as a result, 551 men were graduated from this course in the summer of 1917. And in October of this last year, Hampton, like all other colleges and institutes of its standing, became one of the camps for the Student Army Training Corps, and has not, perhaps, had quite as difficult a time as the colleges in getting readjusted to a peace-time program.

In enlisting and stimulating public opinion and interest at home—a work just as important as that accomplished by the men on the battlefield—Hampton has played its part. Two of the men selected by the War Department and the Committee on Public Information to present the country's war aims to the Negro were Major Allen Washington and Major Moton, who, though now the principal of Tuskegee, may still, I think, be claimed as Hampton's own. These men attended a meeting in Washington in July, to consider, with press representatives and other leaders of Southern opinion, methods by which Negroes might best assist in winning the war. The results were many, so many that I cannot

here enumerate them; but I think we may fairly claim that the success of the Liberty Loan Campaigns, the work of the Negro home demonstration agents of the Department of Agriculture to spur on the Negro to greater food production, the training of colored Red Cross nurses, and the spreading of the idea of unselfish service among hundreds of thousands of Negroes, many of whom have serious grievances against the government or the community, were in great measure due to the earnest and devoted work of these men and others of their type.

And Major Moton has given us fresh proof of his far-seeing judgment, and has shown us that he has been looking forward to and preparing for the return of the men from France, when he tells us that he has spoken to the men in their camps over there, as well as to the communities here, on the proper attitude all should take during the period of reconstruction. These men are coming back covered with honors, having played their part nobly, and the communities to which they come should be proud of them and give them fairer treatment than they have had hitherto. And the men themselves, who have been lauded and fêted and treated by the French people, and particularly by the French women, in a way quite unusual to them, must keep their heads and live up to the high reputation they have made for themselves and their country. If both whites and blacks have these feelings, relations between them cannot help but be far more harmonious than in the past, and a real step forward will have been made towards the ideals for which the whole world has been fighting.

I spoke last year of the enthusiasm which the Indians showed on our entering the world war. It seemed as if the warrior spirit had revived in them, and many of those too old for service were most eager to enter the fight. It was hoped by many of them that separate units of Indian troops might be formed, but that proved to be impossible, owing to their relatively small numbers and lack of training in certain branches of the service. However, before we entered the war, 12,000 Indians enlisted in the Canadian Army and went overseas, thrilled at the prospect of defending the British Empire; and with them went some of the graduates of the Indian schools of this country, many of whom, being wards of this nation, not citizens, could not be drafted. And in our own regular and national armies, scores of Indians have held responsible positions to the rank of major, and every branch of the service has appealed to them, from positions as bakers and chauffeurs to positions in the line, the aviation service, the navy, the marines, and the Y. M. C. A. If, as is estimated, there were 5,000 Indians serving in our forces, it means that one out of fifty has pledged his life to defend the principles of liberty and humanity for which our country entered the war. They trained at Fort Hancock, Fort Dodge, Camp Custer, Jackson, Meigs, Wadsworth, Kearney, and Camp Gaillard in Panama.

Various picturesque stories are told about the departure of these Indian warriors from their homes, to enter into their country's service.

INDIAN PATRIOTISM

A recent number of the *Indian Leader*, published at Haskell Institute, Lawrence, Kansas, gives a vivid account of an interesting patriotic demonstration at Bullhead, South Dakota, on December 11, when seven full-blooded volunteers left their homes to join the American forces in the war. Bullhead is a little settlement on the Standing Rock Reservation, where, a comparatively few years ago, many of the hostiles lived who overcame Custer and his band, and not many miles from the spot where Sitting Bull himself was killed by United States Indian police. "Under the auspices of the Tokala Lodge and the White Horse Brigade, the full-blooded descendants of the former hostiles and many of their sires gathered here in a demonstration of loyalty to their government seldom equaled anywhere.

"Notable participants in this affair were: Mary Crawler, the only woman survivor of the fight against Custer; Francis Bullhead, son of Lieutenant Bullhead, who fell in the final action against Sitting Bull; Francis Redtomahawk, son of Marcellus Redtomahawk, still living, who in personal combat slew Sitting Bull; and Robert P. Higheagle, day-school teacher at this station (named after Lieutenant Bullhead), one of the most intellectual Indians on the Reservation, if not in the entire country."

A procession was formed and marched to the town hall, where, with Robert Higheagle as chairman, an interesting program was given, on which were the names of three former Hampton students: Robert P. Higheagle, '95—address, "Why We Are Assembled Here"; Rev. Joseph Whiteplume—invocation; and Antoine De Rockbraine—address, "Conservation of Foods during the War."

The *Leader* adds: "The quota from this district of the former hostiles is larger in number than the number from all the other districts combined; and, in event of the continuation of the war for some time, Bullhead will probably maintain its numerical ascendancy in the sending of men as national defenders. Every one of these boys belongs to an Indian family of prominence. Once antagonistic to the government, the Bullhead Indians present serried ranks in their devotion to Uncle Sam."

Another interesting incident observed by friends at the departure of the Comanche boys for camp was the singing of an old-time war dirge by the women, the intent of which was to urge the braves on to battle. It was the first time it had been heard in the memory of man in the Southwest.

One of the first Arizona men to die on the field of battle was a full-blooded Pima Indian named Matthew B. Juan, who enlisted in Texas early in the war and survived the "*Tuscania*" disaster. One regiment of the American Expeditionary Forces is reported to have boasted at least twenty famous Indian scouts from a Dakota Reservation, and many of their ancestral fighting instincts and methods have been extremely useful in modern scout patrolling. It is reported that one night six full-blooded Indians scouted six miles into enemy territory, bombed a supper party of German officers with appropriate war whoops, and returned in safety. Another story is told of a band of Indians surprising the enemy by swimming many yards under water and appearing again a long distance from where the Germans had seen them disappear under the water, and thought them safely drowned! I quote anecdotes from the *Southern Workman*, the *Stars and Stripes*, and the *Brooklyn Citizen*:

The first Hampton student to be wounded in the war, so far as is known at the school, is Robert Big Thunder, a Winnebago from Wittenberg, Wisconsin. His father has recently forwarded a letter from him written at a hospital in France. He says: "I was wounded last Friday, June 21, at five o'clock in the morning. We made a rapid raid on the Germans early that morning, at three o'clock, and chased them off a big hill. Our raid was very successful. A piece of bursting shrapnel shell hit me below my left eye, cutting my skin, and went through my nose. I shall be well again, but am afraid my left eye will be very weak. After being wounded, I ran all the way from the front to the first-aid dressing station under heavy artillery fire, but was lucky and was not hit by anything. Another fellow came out with me, and we got dressed at the first-aid station and an auto ambulance hurried us to the field hospital. Then from there I went to two other hospitals, getting the best of care, and finally they shipped us on a United States Red Cross hospital train to this Base Hospital No. ——. I shall be here till I get good and well. It will be some time. Thank God, I was not killed. I wish I was home working on the farm, but this is our duty and we must fight it to a finish: then we can go home safe.

"I've found out what war is now. Gee, it's quite an experience to be in a war like this. I'll never forget the moments I spent at the front. I could hear bullets whistling all around me and big shells from German artillery bursting right behind. Some Germans were up in the trees shooting down on us, and hand grenades coming over and bursting close to us hit some of our boys, hurting them bad. I was with one boy who could shoot well, and he shot down one of the Germans in the tree. One machine gun was only about eight yards from us, but they couldn't see us. I was behind four little trees together, and shooting. We chased them quite a ways and then I was wounded."

It was the Prussian Guard against the American Indian the morning of October 8, says the *Stars and Stripes*, in the hills of Champagne. When it was all over, after the wire-protected slopes had been trampled as though they were no more than bramble patches of thorny and leafless berry bushes, there were no more German gunners left in the earth-banked machine gun nests; the Prussian Guard were further on their way back towards the Aisne, and going fast, and warriors of thirteen Indian tribes looked down on the town of St. Etienne.

It is not difficult to imagine the consternation of the Prussian Guard when the redskins, with war whoops, came out of the forest in true woodman style, reverting to the typical Indian fighting tactics, disregarding rules of modern warfare, disregarding also the withering enemy machine gun fire, and proceeded to clean out the nests of machine guns. Reports from France indicate that the Indian was one of the stanchest, coolest men under fire that faced the Germans in the great war; that the Indian never knew fatigue, never knew fear, smiled in the face of death, and fought stubbornly with a determination to win, no matter what the odds.

WHEN "THE CHIEF" SMILED (From the "Brooklyn Citizen")

"The Chief" is Private Ross, a full-blooded Ute Indian, a member of the —— Infantry. About a year ago he threw up his job of herding sheep in Southern Arizona, walked fifty miles down to Bisbee, "rode the rods" to El Paso, and enlisted. In the training camp he was nicknamed "The Chief," and it was discovered that he had unusual scouting abilities. He was assigned as battalion scout, which pleased him so much that he smiled—for the first time.

Chief Ross is hardly a model soldier. He rarely salutes an officer, says "Ugh" for "Yes, sir," and shakes his head for "No, sir." But "The Chief" wiped out all the little black marks for sins of omission in the fighting on the Vesle.

A lone machine gun in a stone building about 200 yards in front of the Americans was holding up the advance. It was broad daylight—three o'clock in the afternoon. The task of silencing the machine gun was given to "Chief" Ross and a picked patrol of three other men. The emplacement was "spotted" in the upper window of the stone house. Two men were left out in front in the bushes to draw the fire of the gun, while Ross stealthily worked up toward one side of the building and his companion on the other. Ross edged around to where he could see the muzzle of the machine gun protruding from the window. Two seconds later a well-placed grenade burst in the room, killing two Germans and shattering the machine gun. The surviving German executed a strategic retreat through the rear window and slid down to the ground behind the

building, where he would be protected by another machine gun further back.

It was sure death to try to reach the running German from either side of the building. The German was cunning, but not so cunning as "The Chief." He swung himself up to the window and crawled rapidly up the roof toward the ridgepole. From that point of vantage he could see the enemy without danger to himself. Three shots stopped the fleeing Boche.

That was when "The Chief" smiled the second time.

To turn to the war work accomplished at home by Indian men, women, and children, it is a stirring fact that Indians subscribed \$10,000,000 to the first two Liberty Loans, which meant a per capita subscription of more than thirty dollars for all Indians in the United States. In Red Cross campaigns the same spirit was shown. At the Globe (Arizona) Chapter of the Red Cross, 111 Apaches appeared one day last winter with \$222 in their hands. "We want to join the Red Cross," they said. "We are the first contingent; 200 more will come next time." Thirty thousand Indian pupils worked for the Red Cross, and six Indian girls were assigned to hospital work overseas. In one far Western reservation, the Red Cross emblem is displayed in every window; and at one of the Government boarding schools for Sioux children, the children organized a Junior Red Cross and succeeded in raising funds for 228 memberships. On some reservations, baskets were made and sold for the Red Cross; and a "chief" named Ma-ha-wa, the Conqueror, hearing of the sufferings of the Belgians, sent to the relief fund twenty dollars raised by selling corn, and received a grateful and appreciative letter of acknowledgment from the Belgian minister for his gift. At Carlisle School, forty-four of the older girls offered their services during their recreation periods for sewing and other service when the women of Carlisle organized a Navy League; and the women of a reservation near Syracuse started a class, under the Department of Agriculture and the State Agricultural College, for the study of foods, canning, and home economics.

In increased food production, Indians have been of the greatest service, and last year's reports showed a marked increase in production and a determination to excel all records this season. In a message to the "Great White Father" at Washington, Medicine Owl, chief of the Blackfeet Tribe of Montana, expressed his people's sentiment when he said: "We will plant more corn to feed your soldiers, and we will raise more goats and sheep that your soldiers may be clothed; and if you call us to arms, we will go to the front and fight for you!"

THE INDIAN SOLDIER

BY GEORGE STEELE SEYMOUR

Lord of the mountain and the plain he stands,
Ready and prompt to take his country's part;
Erect, with steadfast eyes and willing hands
And loyal heart.

Like the proud eagle who on dauntless wing
Makes his unfettered way across the blue,
He knows no law but Nature's, and no king
But Manitou.

Out on the prairie, at his wild sire's knee,
He early learned all tyrants to despise,
The common hate of men by strength made free,
By courage wise.

So when the war-cry roused the peaceful morn
With its fell threat to all he holds most dear,
True to his blood, Columbia's eldest born
Responded, "Here!"

Son of a great, unconquerable line;
Into his hand put Freedom's holy grail,
And though for him it hold but Death's dark wine,
He will not fail.

—From the "*American Indian Magazine*."

Since the night of February 24, when we saw in Symphony Hall, most of us for the first time I imagine, the insignia of the Red Hand on the left shoulder of the men of Co. L, 6th Mass., now the 372d Infantry, we have seen many of them on our streets; and I wonder if you have been struck, as I have, by the fine, dignified bearing of those men. They all belong to the 93d Division of the National Army, and the story of the insignia, as told by an officer of the 371st Regiment, is that this division, which was a provisional, not a complete division, was sent into action as part of a French division, the 157th, whose insignia was the Red Hand, and our regiments took this mark from them. This division, as I have said, was not a full division. It was made up of four infantry regiments, three of them National Guard regiments; the 369th, formerly the 15th New York, called by the Germans "Hell Fighters"; the 370th, formerly the 8th Illinois, the "Black Devils"; the 371st, a draft regiment; and the 372d, formerly Co. L, with troops from Maryland and Tennessee. This division trained at Camp Hill, Virginia, but the 92d, which was a complete division, trained at different camps, there being a fear of having 30,000 Negroes together in any one place. Of the infantry regiments in this division, we have heard most about the 367th, which trained at Camp Upton, and which was the only regiment in the

camp which could claim to be 100 per cent American. This regiment was called the "Buffaloes," the name being derived from the fact that some of the colored officers in it had served in the regular army out West, where the Indians said that the Negroes advanced like buffaloes, head downward.

In all there were 400,000 Negroes in the army, with 1,200 officers, while before the war there were only four regiments and less than twelve officers. I think it is extremely interesting to know how well the Negroes stood physically as compared to the whites. Mr. Scott stated at Symphony Hall that though the Negroes were only 8 per cent of the men registered under the draft, they were 15 per cent, or almost twice as large a proportion, of the men actually called.

And now a word about the colored officer. There was much doubt expressed as to the advisability of having colored officers in the army. Many said that Negroes would not fight unless led by white men, and from what I hear there are varying opinions still. Major Moton, I thought, was very fair about it, as he always is on every subject. He admitted that many colored officers had been sent back after their baptism of fire. He told of two brothers named Jones, whom he knew personally, one of whom failed entirely; the other held a trench, though badly wounded, and was made a captain. We hear that one white officer said that, as he was going "over the top," he looked around and saw his men were not following him; and we also hear that the colonel of the 370th, which had all colored officers except three—the colonel and two others—said of his regiment that the only trouble with it was "they didn't want to stop!" It is impossible to sift out all the evidence for and against. I dare say it will never be proved. I think in the majority of instances it was a case of the personality of the officer himself, and there is no question but that some of them did splendidly. The only conclusion that can be drawn is that the colored officers, having to overcome the natural prejudice that their men felt about taking orders from men of their own race, had to be of somewhat stronger character than white men in the same positions. And, as Major Moton said, if colored men, who have never had any opportunity to lead or govern men except in their churches, granges, and fraternal organizations, had proved as efficient as white officers in this war, it would have been a disgrace to the Anglo-Saxon race!

Most of the colored troops crossed in June, and twenty days after landing were in action, and continued to be so until the day the Armistice was signed, when the 369th was the American regiment nearest the Rhine, with a record of 191 days in the trenches and none of its number taken prisoner! This regiment was in France longer than any of the others, having crossed in November, 1917, and serving with the 4th French Army under General Gouraud from March 12, 1918, and having its

hardest fighting just west of the Argonne. The French Army order, citing the entire regiment for the Croix de Guerre, reads as follows:

"Under command of Colonel Hayward, who, though wounded, insisted on leading his regiment in battle; of Lieutenant Colonel Pickering, admirably cool and brave; of Major Cobb (killed) and Major Spencer (severely wounded); of Major Little, a true leader of men, the 369th reserve Infantry, U. S. A., engaging in an offensive for the first time in the drive of September, 1918, stormed powerful enemy positions, energetically defended, too, after heavy fighting, the town of S——, captured prisoners, and brought back six cannon and a great number of machine guns."

And in all our pride and enthusiasm over the men who were thus honored by France and this country for the glorious part they played amid the noise and thunder of the front lines, let us not forget the thousands of men of the service battalions and stevedore regiments who, at the ports of Bordeaux, Brest, St. Nazaire, etc., and at the Service of Supplies, helped by their unceasing and tireless efforts to back up the men at the front. Mr. Wright, a Y. M. C. A. secretary, who was with one of those regiments, has told of how these men, of all grades, from the lowest, most uneducated navy from Florida or Georgia to the graduate of Hampton, Tuskegee, Fisk University, even of Harvard and the New England Conservatory of Music, performed for numberless hours at a stretch the hardest kind of physical labor, unloading the great ships at those ports and shipping food, ammunition, and supplies of every kind to the men who were playing a more dangerous and heroic, but no more important, part in the great struggle at the front. One and all of those brave colored men have done their part gladly and willingly for our country and the world, and is it strange that they should look eagerly and hopefully forward to seeing that the democracy for which they have given their blood should be a democracy for the black man as well as for the white?

Mr. Emmet J. Scott, secretary of Tuskegee, who as special assistant to the Secretary of War has been in a position to know all the problems and difficulties connected with the Negro soldiers, and whose services have been invaluable to the Department and the Army, in speaking at the annual Tuskegee Negro Conference, in January, on the problems connected with the demobilization of Negro soldiers, expressed so well the feeling of thousands of thinking and serious-minded men of both races that I am going to close by quoting him. At the end of his address he said:

"Nearly 400,000 gallant black soldiers, 'fruit and flower of the Negro race,' have helped to make the world safe for Freedom and Democracy; many of them have fought, bled, and died that their country's ideals

might triumph. If, in the hour of her travail and danger, the Negro has neither faltered nor failed in pledging his life, his labor, his money, his all in defense of his country's safety and honor, surely in the hour of victory and prosperity he will not be denied fair treatment and the recompense accorded other soldiers because of his valuable services and unswerving patriotism. The Negro asks the full protection of the law, to be left unhindered and unhampered in his industrial and commercial pursuits, to be given a fair deal and full opportunity to educate his children, and to work out his own destiny—being loyal to his family, to his community, to his country, and to his God!"